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S E R M O N,

ON THE
NECESSARY KNOWLEDGE
OF THE
LORD'S SUPPER,

AND THE NECESSARY PREPARATION FOR IT,
SHEWN FROM THE WORDS OF ITS INSTITUTION;

AS IT WAS PREACHED AT THE
CATHEDRAL OF YORK, *March 29th, 1727*

D U R H A M;

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following discourse, composed for the use of a country parish, being occasionally delivered in York Cathedral, was thought by some of the reverend members of that church, (whose judgment was not to be doubted, and their request not to be denied) proper to be put into the hands of the common people; and is therefore now published chiefly for the use and benefit of such.

The principal design of it, is to draw the knowledge of the sacrament, and whatever relates to the duty of receiving it, into as little a compass as it is possible, both for the better instruction and for the greater encouragement of ordinary communicants, who have neither heads and attention for the subject, unless it be made short and clear, nor hearts and courage for the duty, unless it be represented both safe and easy to every sincere, though unlearned christian. It is with this view, that the necessary knowledge of the Lord's supper, is throughout the sermon confined to the two points which appear plainly to be the great ends and design of our Lord in its institution; and that every instruction relating to examination, preparation, &c. is grounded solely upon the consideration of those two points; and shewn to follow from them by so easy consequence, that a well meaning man, who keeps the points themselves in view, must naturally make the right conclusions, and form the proper directions for himself more or less perfectly perhaps according to the capacity God hath given him, but safely and usefully, in every measure of capacity, provided he have a good intention, and a sound heart.

JUNE 9th, 1792.

ALPHABETICAL

The first thing which comes into the mind of a
man, when he is first created, is a sense of
his own existence, and a desire to know
the cause of it. This is the first step
towards wisdom, and the first step
towards knowledge. It is the first step
towards the discovery of the truth, and
the first step towards the attainment of
the highest good.

The second thing which comes into the mind of a
man, when he is first created, is a sense of
his own weakness, and a desire to be
strong. This is the second step
towards wisdom, and the second step
towards knowledge. It is the second step
towards the discovery of the truth, and
the second step towards the attainment of
the highest good.

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The third thing which comes into the mind of a
man, when he is first created, is a sense of
his own mortality, and a desire to be
immortal. This is the third step
towards wisdom, and the third step
towards knowledge. It is the third step
towards the discovery of the truth, and
the third step towards the attainment of
the highest good.

THE END

I COR. XI. 28.

But let a Man examine himself, and so let him eat of that Bread, and drink of that Cup.

THIS is the only place in Scripture, that I know of, where there is any direct mention made of *preparation* for the receiving the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. In this verse we are directed to *examine ourselves*, and a little further at the 31st verse we are advised to *judge ourselves*, which as I take it means the same sort of *preparation* that is here expressed by *examining*. But the occasion upon which these directions were given, if it be not well attended to, is apt to lead us to misunderstand the directions themselves, and to raise in us a notion of *such a necessary preparation*, as the apostle doth not appear to have enjoined as *necessary*. This text for instance happening to stand between two others that have a dreadful sound with them, it being declared in a verse immediately foregoing, *That whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord*; and it being further declared in the verse immediately following, *that whosoever eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself*. I say my text coming in upon this occasion, and the advice of examination being given by the apostle, in order to prevent *such unworthy receiving*, and *such punishment* as would follow thereupon, hath caused people to imagine that this preparation for the Sacrament is a very nice and difficult thing, and not to be under-

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taken without prodigious caution, in order to avoid a guilt of so peculiar a name, and escape the *damnation* wherewith it is threatened. And the fears of not having done enough by way of preparation hath too often filled the minds of well disposed persons with grievous doubts and perplexities, whether they were worthy communicants or not.

Now, though there is hardly a sermon preached, or a Treatise written about the Lord's Supper, and the preparation in order to partake of it, wherein this matter is not set right, and the case of the *Corinthians* shewn to be quite another thing from what we mean now-a-days by unworthy receiving; and also the *damnation* spoken of shewn not to be the eternal damnation of the soul; tho' I say an account of this is to be met with in every book upon the Holy Sacrament, and is what most understanding people do know already, yet I must speak a word or two upon it, before I proceed any further; for there is no fair arguing from my text till this point be first settled.

Let it be observed then, that the *unworthy receiving* of the Sacrament which the apostle blames the *Corinthians* for, was, as he himself expresses it, *their not discerning the Lord's body*; or as it might be as well rendered, *their not distinguishing the Lord's Body*; or, as it is expressed in our Communion-Office, *not considering the Lord's body*. That is, they eat bread and drink wine in the Sacrament as they would do at an ordinary feast, or common meal to satisfy hunger, without considering the ordinance of Christ, by which the Sacrament was made a representation of his body and blood. This plainly appears to have been their case throughout this whole chapter. They used before the Sacrament to have a common feast of rich and poor together,
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which was done with a very good design at first; but the *Corinthians* had perverted this design to a bad use: And therefore St *Paul* tells them, that they came not together for the better but for the worse, ver. 17. *This*, says he, *is not to eat the Lord's Supper: For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper, and one is hungry and another is drunken; what have ye not houses to eat and drink in, &c.* ver. 20, 21, 22, Upon this he proceeds to give them a short and true account of the nature and end of the Sacrament: That it was ordained by our Saviour for the commemoration of his passion, and the benefits that we receive thereby; and then he goes on, *Whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily*, that is as he presently explains it, *not discerning the Lord's body*, viz. not distinguishing the bread of the Sacrament from common bread, not considering the worth and value of our Saviour's ordinance, nor being mindful of the veneration that is due to it, he *shall be guilty*, says he, *of the body and blood of the Lord*; That is, he shall be guilty of profaning and irreverently using those consecrated creatures of bread and wine, which are the signs and pledges of Christ's body and blood. So that I think we cannot be guilty of receiving unworthily in St *Paul's* sense, so long as we are sensible, and do bear in our minds, that the bread and wine in the Sacrament do represent the very body and blood of our Saviour; and so long as we do receive them with such reverence and devotion as the apprehension of their being the representations of our crucified Lord must naturally fill every serious mind with.

Well, but the apostle says further, that *whosoever receives unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself*; and what is the meaning of this?

Why.

Why, certainly whatever it means, it relates only to such persons as are guilty of that particular instance of unworthy receiving, which he in the very words describes, *by not discerning the Lord's body, or as you have it in the margin, not differencing or distinguishing the Lord's body*, which I explained before. But though it were to be extended to all sorts of *unworthy receiving*, yet there is no difficulty in knowing what it means: Which is no more than *punishment or judgment*, as you will find it rendered in the margin of your Bibles. Nay, and this only a temporal punishment or judgment neither, as you learn from the following verses: *For this cause*, (says St Paul) *many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep or die*. That is, God punishes you in this world for profaning his holy mysteries. But so far was he from intending to threaten them with the *eternal damnation of their souls*, that he tells them presently after that these judgments were only God's corrections for their amendment, that they might escape damnation in the end. *When we are judged*, says he, *we are chastened of the Lord that we should not be condemned with the world*, ver. 32. And it is in this sense that you are likewise to understand those expressions in the Communion-Office *of the great peril of unworthy receiving, and of our eating and drinking our own damnation, of kindling God's wrath against us, and provoking him to plague us with divers diseases, and sundry kinds of death*. Our Church intends nothing more by these expressions than what St Paul did by those which I repeated just now. She doth not advance any doctrine of her own, nor require any thing more of us, *than that we must consider how St Paul exhorteth all persons in this one passage of Scripture that I am upon*. And I truly think that
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if this passage be understood, there will need no long consideration to make a judgment whether we be *unworthy receivers* in *St Paul's* sense or no; and for that reason whether or no *we be liable to those punishments*, which followed upon such unworthy receiving. I believe indeed that very few, if any in our days, are guilty of this sort of *unworthiness* which he speaks of; and for that reason I do not see that we have reason ordinarily to apprehend those particular *punishments* of unworthy receiving which were inflicted upon the *Corinthians* for extraordinary reasons in the times of the apostles. But however this be, (for no body can pretend to determine upon it) yet thus much is plain, that the belief or notion that some people are apt to take up, of being *eternally damned for such unworthiness*, is utterly groundless; and also that if we will judge ourselves, we shall not be judged of the Lord, as *St Paul*, and our church upon his authority affirmeth. Which *judging of ourselves*, if you understand it as I hinted in the beginning of this discourse, of a due and proper examination before the Sacrament will prevent the guilt of unworthiness of any kind. Or if you chuse to understand it, as some others do, of self-condemnation and sorrow for having received unworthily in any respect, it is equally true in that sense also. For unworthy receiving is upon the same foot with other wilful and presumptuous sins; which, if seriously and heartily repented of, will not exclude us from God's pardon and the kingdom of Heaven. The penitent who *judges and condemns himself* for his presumptions in communicating, and bewails all his miscarriages in it, will not, according to the mercies of the gospel, *Be judged of the Lord.*

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I proceed then to consider this text of *St Paul* about *examination* before the Sacrament, so far as it seems to concern us now, amongst whom there is no such custom of feasting before the Communion, as there was among the *Corinthians*, and as far as we can judge, or at least conjecture, no such temporal plague or punishment inflicted upon account of such unworthiness as they were guilty of.

And truly all that can be directly drawn from my text, is, that we ought to examine ourselves whether we discern the Lord's body: That is, whether we sufficiently understand and apprehend the great difference between the bread and wine in this Sacrament, and common bread and wine.

It is true indeed this examination will unavoidably lead us into an enquiry into the ordinance of Christ. We must know, and perfectly understand *what* it was that our Lord appointed to be done in this Sacrament, and *why* he so appointed it. And for this reason we see *St Paul* instructs the *Corinthians*, by giving them in a few plain words the institution of the Sacrament itself; where the whole meaning and design of it appears from our blessed Saviour's own words, ver. 23, 24, 25. And then he advises them to examine themselves, having given them the institution as a rule to examine themselves by.

And certainly the institution of the Sacrament is, of all others, the most proper rule for examining ourselves, and guiding our preparation by, not only to prevent the unworthiness of the *Corinthians*, but any other sort of miscarriage in this great duty. And I the rather chuse to insist upon the institution only as *St Paul* has done, and keep close to it, because I am afraid this business of examination and preparation

preparation hath been usually represented as too difficult and nice a thing for men of ordinary capacities; and too tedious a thing for men in business; and that honest and sober people have sometimes been deterred upon this account from communicating: At least from doing it so often as they would otherwise have done. All that is *necessary* for a man to know, and to do, in order to be a worthy receiver, (at least all that seems necessary from this place of Scripture, which, as I said, is the only one that directly requires an examination of ourselves) I say, *All that is necessary*, I will endeavour to instruct you fully in; and you will find it lies within a little compass, and is suitable to every man's common apprehension. More than this, though useful to many, yet is not needful for all. They who have opportunity and leisure would do well to go thro' those larger forms of preparation, which are to be found in many of our books of private devotions. But tho' this be recommended to such persons, yet it *must not* be insisted upon *as necessary* for all people. Far be it from us to think that no man can be a worthy receiver, unless he hath gone thro' all that the author of his private devotion hath prescribed him. A man that understandeth what the Sacrament is, and approaches it with faith and suitable reverence, is, (I may venture to pronounce it) a worthy receiver, whether his preparation were long or short. Do not mistake me, as if I disparaged any of these forms of devotion, or thought them unprofitable, for they are undoubtedly helpful and beneficial to those who have opportunity of using them. But in the mean time, while those who have these forms, and likewise leisure to use them, do govern themselves by them, I beg leave to instruct the
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more ordinary and ignorant sort of people, who have not these happy opportunities, in *all* that I think will be *necessary* to make them worthy communicants. And as it is to such I am speaking, I shall do it with all the clearness of distinction and plainness of words which I am not able to use for expressing my sense and notion of the thing which I would deliver.

The necessary qualifications may be distinguished into these two sorts.

Such as respect the knowledge and understanding of a man.

And such as respect the frame and disposition of his heart.

For no man who is baptized, and professes the faith of Christ, can be supposed to be unqualified for the Lord's Supper, but upon one of these two accounts; either *his ignorance* that he doth not understand the business he is going about, or his *unfitness with regard to his life and conversation*; that his heart is not in so good a frame as a man's heart ought to be when he comes to the Lord's table. And therefore all the examination which is necessary for any man to make of himself before receiving, will fall under these two enquiries; one into his head, and other into his heart.

First. Whether he hath a sufficient knowledge of the nature of the holy Sacrement, and of the ends for which it was appointed?

And, *Secondly*, Whether the frame and disposition of his mind be such as it should be on so solemn an occasion?

The first of these points the apostle doth directly charge us in my text to *examine ourselves in before we eat of that bread and drink of that cup*; and the the

other is a point which follows immediately from it, and so may be looked upon as included in it.

And if you look into the Church Catechism, you will find all the instructions there given about the Lord's Supper are contained under these two heads, the knowledge of the ordinance, and the moral qualifications. For of the five questions which are there put about this Sacrament, the four first relate to the design, nature and end of it : And the last to the frame and disposition of the man's mind who comes to receive it.

I. I begin then with my first point. We are to examine ourselves, whether we sufficiently understand, or have a competent knowledge of the nature of this Sacrament, and the ends for which it was appointed ?

Now truly whatever you may think of this matter, there is so little of nicety or curiosity in it, that a man of the meanest capacity and dullest understanding may comprehend the notion. It is not required that every ordinary communicant should be able to give an account of the several opinions and disputes which have been held about this Sacrament. It is not required that he should be able to determine the questions about the real presence of Christ, or give an account of the points about the Sacrament, which are maintained and defended by the *Papists* on one side, and the *Lutharians* on another, and the *Socinians* on another, &c. God be thanked neither transubstantiation, nor consubstantiation, nor any other of the controverted points are made necessary to be known either by Christ or his apostles. The Sacrament which our Lord hath commanded *all* his disciples to observe till his coming again, and which he has appointed

as a means generally necessary to our salvation, *must needs be* such a thing as *all men*, the meanest of men may understand, if they will, and carry in their minds.

Laying aside therefore all those questions and reasonings which are proper only for men of parts and learning to engage in, take the account of the *Lord's Supper*, and all that is *needful* for us to know, as it is given us by our Saviour in two plain sentences adapted to every man's capacity.

"The same night that he was betrayed, he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he brake it and said,

"Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you. This do in remembrance of me.

"After the same manner he took the cup, and said, *This cup is the New Testament in my blood; this do ye as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of me,*" ver. 23, 24, 25.

I think the words here are all easy and clear, and that there is nothing wanting in them to be explained to the meanest understanding, unless it be the proper sense of the word *Testament*, (which may not perhaps be so readily understood) and also the use and propriety of a figure which is made use of in either sentence.

Now, as to the sense of the word *Testament*, you will find the proper signification of it noted in the margin by the word *Covenant*, which hath a fixed and certain signification in our *English* tongue. And when you further observe it is called the *New Covenant*, and moreover the *New Covenant in our Saviour's blood*, you will readily perceive that it can be no other than *that Covenant* which God hath enter'd into with mankind thro' Jesus Christ, that *New Covenant* of which he is the mediator, *Heb. xii. 24.* Which *Covenant* we have all enter'd into by

by baptism, and which *Covenant* we do actually renew with God, as often as we partake of the Lord's Supper, as I shall shew you more clearly by and by.

The other thing to be observed by you, is the use of a figure in each sentence, *This is my body*, speaking of the bread. *This cup is the new Covenant*, speaking of the wine.

Let us take them distinctly. *This bread is my body*. You will presently apprehend, that this could not be *truly* said in strictness of speech; and therefore you must understand it figuratively. But then it is a figure, or way of speech as easy to be understood, as if our Lord had expressed himself literally. For it can have no meaning consistent with common sense and reason but this, *viz. This bread represents to you my body, which is broken for you, and therefore you must eat it in remembrance of me*. When therefore the Roman Catholicks press us with saying, *That these words of our Saviour are positive and express, and so plain, that they wonder how we dare dispute against their literal meaning*. We answer, That indeed they are as plain as any words in the Bible: That is, *They are a plain figure*, the meaning of which is so easy and obvious, that we wonder how any body can mistake it. But if you will understand the words as the *Roman Catholicks* do, in their strict literal sense, they are so far from being *plain*, as they pretend, that it is impossible for any man to *conceive the meaning* of them. And instead of having an easy and obvious sense, they contain an unintelligible mystery, or a notion that no mortal can apprehend. Nay, a mystery we might be content with, if that was all, for we acknowledge the Sacrament to be a mystery: But they contain, according to this way of interpreting,

ing, a downright absurdity and contradiction to common sense. But I say, look upon the words only *as a figure*, and such an one as our Saviour often made use of, and then they have as natural and as easy a meaning as any words that he ever spoke.

The very same sort of expression you have in the other sentence, *This cup is the new Covenant in my blood*, which if understood literally, can signify nothing but this ; That the *Covenant is a cup*, which instead of containing the blood, is contained in the blood ; than which nothing can be more difficult to be understood. But now consider it as spoken in the same figurative way with the former sentence, and nothing will be more plain. As our Lord had said, *This my body*, meaning, *This bread represents to you, or is a sign or pledge of my body* ; so here he says, *This cup is the new Covenant*, meaning, *This cup of wine represents to you, or is a sign or pledge of the new Covenant in my blood*. A Covenant for you all ; and therefore drink ye *all* of this, and as oft as ye shall do so, do it in remembrance of me who shed my blood to purchase this *new Covenant* for you.

I confess there is some little variation of words in the accounts given of this institution by the Evangelists. But if you do but still observe the use of this figure, and sense of the word *Testament*, you will find they all speak the very same thing ; and that according to all their accounts, the bread and the wine is to represent to us the *body and blood of Christ*, and withal, to be a sign and pledge of the *new Covenant*, that he hath obtained for us by his death and passion.

Having then fully explained whatever may be liable to be mistaken in these words, I say we have in these two sentences a full account of the nature
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nd design of this Sacrament: So that whosoever understands and remembers these *two sentences*, will have *that qualification* in point of knowledge, which is *needful* to render him a worthy communicant.

For, *First*, He will learn from hence that *one great end* and design of this Sacrament is our eating and drinking at God's table to *remember*, or to *commemorate our blessed Saviour*, and all his kindnesses to us, more especially his last great kindness and surpassing love towards us, in giving himself, that is, his body and blood for our Redemption.

And, *Secondly*, He will learn from hence, that the *other great end*, and design of this Sacrament, is, our *renewing*, and repeated *sealing of that Covenant*, which we have entered into with God, at our baptism.

And here I think it all that is necessary for the instruction of our understandings, in order to our worthy receiving. But however, I shall speak a little more particularly to both these ends or designs of the Lord's supper.

1. The first great end and design of this Sacrament is to remember Christ, our Lord and Master, as appears from what he said both when he gave the bread and the cup, *Do this*, said he, *in remembrance of me*, or as ye will find it in the margin, *for a remembrance of me*. And that we are in a more particular manner to commemorate his death and passion in this Sacrament, appears plainly from his speaking of *his body broken*, and *his blood shed* for as if he had said, *This bread must put you in mind of my body crucified for you, and this cup must put you in mind of my blood spilt for you*. When I am gone remember me, who have *thus* obtained a new Covenant for you, who have *thus* wrought you redemption, have *thus* suffered for your sakes.

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I think there is no man living that can be said to have common sense, but who can plainly apprehend this to be *one great end* of the Holy Communion. And I am sure there is no man but who also *can do this* in obedience to our Lord's command, if he have but a mind to do it.

This is the first thing. But before I pass on to speak to the other which relates to the *new Covenant*, I would consider one objection that offers itself here.

Perhaps it may be said, what occasion was there to ordain a particular ceremony for this purpose? You can remember Christ and his death and sufferings without coming to the Lord's table?— I answer, allowing all this to be true, yet since it pleased our Saviour, that we should meet together, and commemorate his death *in this particular manner*, in which there is a lively representation of his body broken, and his blood shed for us; we may be well content to comply with this his last request, and command, and commemorate his death *in that manner* in which he would have us do it.

But this is not all. You are mistaken if you imagine there is no more in this commemoration than a bare calling to mind his death: And you will be sensible of this mistake, if you do but consider your own intentions when you offer yourselves at God's table.

For, *First*, You do by this action publicly declare to all the world, that you believe in him; that you own him for your Saviour; that you are not offended or disgusted at the reproachful manner of his death, and painful sufferings; that you are so far from being ashamed of his cross, that you are desirous thus to *shew forth his death*, (as St Paul says)

says) *till his coming again* : In short, that you openly profess his religion, and worship, and do heartily join in that part of religious worship, which doth in the most peculiar manner distinguish us Christians from men of all other religions in the world.

Secondly, By this commemoration in the Sacrament, you do not only shew your faith in a crucified Saviour, and profess yourselves publickly to be his disciples ; but you do moreover publickly declare your thanks, and give your praises to God for all the benefits of his passion. It is upon this account, that the cup in the Sacrament is called by *St Paul, the cup of blessing*, 1 Cor. x. 17. that is to say, the cup of praise or thanksgiving : In receiving of which we thank and bless God with our most grateful acknowledgments for the work of our redemption by Christ. For this same reason also the Sacrament is called in our Communion-Office the *sacrifice of our praise and thanksgiving* ; and was always called by the Church Catholic by the name of *Eucharist*, which put into *English* would be *returning of thanks, or a feast of praise*.

Thirdly, You do by this action not only commemorate our Lord's passion with public thanks, but you do plead his sufferings for you to God the Father. *You shew the Lord's death till he comes again*, not only to your fellow-creatures but to God Almighty, setting forth the merits of his passion, to the great avenger of sin, and suing out your own pardon upon account of his all-sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world.

I hope you think these things are very different from barely calling our Saviour to mind. But however there is no difficulty in them. Every sincere christian that comes to the Sacrament will naturally commemorate our Lord in this manner, if
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he knows any thing of the matter he comes about, or attends to the office that is performed in his hearing. / Indeed a man must be supposed quite stupid that hath not these thoughts in his head, when he comes in a serious temper to communicate. I say every honest christian that comes to God's table not out of *form*, but out of *duty*, will come to shew that he is really a christian and that he is not ashamed publickly to own his crucified Master ; *he will* come likewise with a thankful remembrance of his Master's sufferings for him ; and with a desire that God would consider those sufferings, and would for the sake of his righteous dying Son pardon the iniquities of his living sinful servant.

And this is all that we mean by remembering or commemorating Christ in the Sacrament.

II. The other end and design of the Lord's Supper, as appears plainly from the institution of it, is, that we should hereby renew the covenant we have made with God at our baptism. For when our Saviour says of the wine, *This cup is the new Covenant in my blood ; or, This is my blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you :* He manifestly proposes this communion to us, as a means or way whereby we should confirm or renew our covenant made with God through his blood. Our receiving the cup, *as the cup of the covenant*, must necessarily imply on our part, either the confirmation of the covenant yet subsisting, or the renewal of the covenant broken ; and our blessed Lord's propounding, and offering the cup to us by his ministers, under the gracious character of *the blood of the covenant*, must necessarily imply on God's part, his ready admission

admission of us again into the christian Covenant if broken by us, and his declaration to all worthy communicants, *that he will perform all that he has promised in Christ, and will make over and convey to them all the benefits and blessings of the Gospel.*

To be more plain with you, if I can. The whole case is this: Jesus Christ by his death, hath procured and established a *new covenant* between God and Man: The substance and purport of which is as follows, *that mankind on their part should renounce the World and the Devil, and the Flesh; believe in Christ Jesus, and perform obedience to all God's laws: And that God on his part, upon their repentance, faith and obedience, should forgive them all their past sins and confer upon them eternal life in the World to come: And all this in consideration of the sufferings of the righteous Jesus.*

This now is the *new Covenant*. And this we have all entered into with God by baptism: The very end and design of baptism being to admit us into this Covenant with God. And accordingly as we then undertook to become true servants and disciples of Jesus Christ, so God also undertook (provided we kept our part in the Covenant) to make over to us the benefits of Christ's sufferings, that is to say pardon of sins past, and grace in this life, and glory in the next. But now when we come to years and have passed through some part of our trial, such are the temptations of the World and the Devil, and such the sinfulness of our Flesh, and frailty of Human Nature, that we have on our part failed in our promises, and broken our vows, and have thereby made a breach in that Covenant which we made with God at our baptism, or which others made for for us in our name. But so gracious is God to us, for he knows our weakness, and our sinful natures,

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and what a wicked ensnaring World we live in; I say, so good is he notwithstanding to us, that he has declared he will not take advantage of these forfeitures, so long as we truly repent of all our miscarriages and failures in the Covenant, and endeavour for the future to approve ourselves more worthy members of Christ's Church and Religion. But then, whereas it is highly fitting that when we come to see and acknowledge our sinful departures from first engagements, we should not only condemn our past faults, but enter into fresh engagements of future obedience; therefore Christ hath of his infinite kindness, and to our great comfort, appointed this other Sacrament of his *Body* and *Blood*, whereby we may from time to time renew our Covenant with God, and recover ourselves to that state of Virtue and Holiness of life to which we engaged ourselves at our baptism. And so very kind and merciful is Almighty God to us, as not only to make this second Sacrament a means of conveying pardon to us for what is past, but also of conveying further supplies of grace and assistance to us, that we may keep our part in the *new Covenant* better than we have hitherto done.

Whenever therefore we receive this Sacrament, we do in effect consecrate ourselves anew to the service of God thro' Jesus Christ; and God is again thro' Jesus Christ reconciled to us, and takes us into his service. The administering of the Bread and Wine by the Minister, is the confirming and ratifying the *Covenant* on God's part. And the receiving these by the Communicant, is the renewing and ratifying the *Covenant* on his part. So that every Sacrament we partake of, is a new signing and sealing of the *Covenant* made between God and Man through the Death of his Son Jesus Christ.

I think

I think all this is very easy to be understood, nor do I know of any thing more which is necessary for the ordinary Communicant to bear in his mind, than these two points which I have been proving to be the end of the *Lord's Supper* from the very words of the institution.

But since the same sort of objection may be made to this last point, which was taken notice of on the former, I shall answer it here in it's proper place. It may be said, what occasion was there for appointing a particular ceremony for the renewing our *Covenant*? Is not this done to all intents and purposes every time that we seriously repent of our sins, and make new resolutions to persevere in our obedience for the future? When we are once admitted into the Christian Covenant by baptism, though we fail in the performance of our part, yet doth not repentance alone restore us to a perfect reconciliation with God? To which I answer, that the way to apprehend how far the *Lord's Supper* is necessary for the renewing our Covenant with God when we have broken it; is to consider how far the other Sacrament of baptism is necessary for our first admission into the *new Covenant*. If faith and repentance will do of themselves, and intitle a man to the blessings of the gospel, without being admitted into *Covenant* with God by that right and ceremony of baptism which Christ hath ordained, then it will be easy to imagine how a man may renew his Covenant with God as often as he pleases, though he live in an utter neglect of the *Lords Supper*. But now we are, generally speaking, so well satisfied of the necessity of baptism where it can be obtained, that we account no man within the *Covenant*, so long as he refuses or wilfully neglects to be baptized; and therefore we are always careful to bring
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our Children as soon as may be to this holy ordinance ; and it would be well for us all if we had the like right notion of necessity of the *Lord's Supper* to all grown Christians ; for surely our Saviour's command, *drink ye all of this, for this is the new Covenant in my blood*, is as general and as express as his commission *for baptizing all Nations*. For God's sake let us remember ourselves what we teach our Children in the Catechism, *that there are two things ordained by Christ as generally necessary to Salvation*, that is to say, *baptism and the Supper of the Lord*. How come the Sacraments here to be put upon the foot of *general necessity*, unless it be for this reason, that the *Lord's Supper* is as plainly a means appointed by our Saviour for preserving us in the Covenant, and communion with Christ, as baptism is the appointed means of our first entering into that Covenant and communion. *Baptism is necessary*, and we do all readily acknowledge it, for the remission of sins committed before baptism, whether they be original or actual. Well then, the *Lord's Supper* is equally, or in the same degree, necessary for the remission of sins committed after baptism, as the means ordained by Christ to that purpose, for the use of all such baptized persons as are capable of being worthy partakers of it. No man will presume to say that he hath kept up in all points to his baptismal vows and engagements ; and therefore no man should presume to say that he can assure to himself the blessings of the *new Covenant*, if he lives in the neglect of the ordinance of the *Lord's Supper*, which Christ has given was a means of receiving from time to time those blessings, and as a pledge to assure us of the same. And from hence we make a judgement, and I think a pretty sure one, that no man can by any private action or rite of his own inventing, *properly renew his Covenant with God through Christ*, but that in order to do that, he must apply

apply himself to the appointed means, and partake of the *Holy Supper*.

But further, allowing that a man may renew his Covenant with God in some sense by private resolutions and repeated vows, yet certainly he can never do it so properly and so effectually as at the Lord's Table; forasmuch as it is not possible for him to lay himself under a stronger obligation to perform his part in the Covenant than he doth by entering into solemn engagements with God, publicly at his Altar. A holy resolution or vow made at a religious commemoration of our Saviour's death and sufferings, and confirmed by partaking of holy mysteries, the signs of his body and blood, and the pledges of his love, must needs more sensibly and deeply affect the heart, and leave a more lasting impression on the memory than any that can be made in the warmest temper of private devotion. And this is what I beg you all thoroughly to consider and remember (both you who are already Communicants, and you who intend to be so) that whenever you do receive the Lord's Supper, you are supposed in the most solemn manner to renew your baptismal vows, to dedicate yourselves afresh to God's service, and utterly to renounce for ever the Devil, the World and the Flesh. You take as it were an *oath of fidelity* to your master Jesus Christ, and swear to obey him to your lives end, as the author and captain of your salvation.

But to conclude this point. As there is no other way whereby we can renew our Covenant with God so properly and effectually with regard to the part we act in that renewal, as by partaking at his table; so neither is there any other way whereby we can expect the confirmation and sealing of the Covenant on God's part with *such great and glorious blessings and benefits*, as he bestows and makes over

all worthy communicants in the *Lord's Supper*, under the character and notion of Christ's body and blood, which are figured by the bread and wine. If you ask, what are these singular benefits which attend the ordinance, and what is this body and blood of Christ with which he feeds and nourishes us? I answer nothing less, my Brethren, than the free pardon of all our past sins, and the further assistances of his holy spirit to enable us to live up to our engagements in his service; and, which is the end and design of all, *the preservation of our Souls, and Bodies to everlasting life.* This is the invisible and spiritual communion of the very body and blood of Christ, whereby we are made *one* with him and he with us. This is the application of his precious death and all-sufficient merits to our Souls, which strengthens and refreshes them to eternal life, as our bodies are strengthened and refreshed by the the consecrated bread and wine.

And now, I believe, I have delivered all that is *ordinarily necessary* to be known about the *Lord's Supper*, having not only shewn two great ends and designs of it, but answered the objections that may be made to them, in such manner as proves the fitness and necessity of the rite itself for the purposes, to which it it was ordained. And I hope what has been said, has been likewise so clear and plain, that there is none of you but can understand it: And whosoever doth understand *thus much*, may with respect to his knowledge safely come to the *Lord's Supper*, if he be but proportionably qualified with respect to the state of his heart and moral dispositions; which was the other thing to be examined into in order to our preparation.

II. And this we shall find to lie still in a less compass, and to be more readily understood than the former

point. Indeed I have already in a manner, that is, by easy consequence, resolved the most material enquiries into this business in what I have said before. For there is no *moral qualification or disposition of heart* requisite for your worthy receiving this Sacrament, but what you have seen a plain reason for in the account which hath been given of the nature and design of the ordinance. St Paul proposes this institution of Christ as the rule and ground of examination, and no man can desire a better foundation.

As for instance, you observe, that one design of the Sacrament, is the *renewal of our Covenant*: Therefore one necessary qualification in the communicant, must be his *repenting truly of his former sins, and steadfastly purposing to lead a new life*; for, otherwise he comes not to renew his Covenant, but to mock God, and to prophane his holy ordinance. But if he comes thus disposed, that is, acknowledging and bewailing his former miscarriages, and (what is a more material part of his repentance) heartily resolving to keep up to his engagements better for the future, then he is certainly qualified to receive the Sacrament in this respect, as it is a renewal of the *new Covenant*.

Again, you observe, that another end and design of this Sacrament, is the *commemoration of our blessed Lord*, and more particularly *of his death and passion*. But now how can we *do this in remembrance of him*, unless we do really believe in him, and are persuaded, he truly was (what in the Sacrament he is represented to have been) sacrificed for the sins of the World; that he was crucified and his *blood shed* for our *redemption*? And how can we come persuaded of the truth of this without a grateful sense of so great a blessing, and so inestimable a mercy vouchsafed to ourselves

ourselves and to all mankind? Therefore another qualification in us must be, the *having a lively faith in God's mercy, through Christ with a thankful remembrance of his death.* And whosoever hath this persuasion, and this disposition along with it (and one would wonder how they can be separated) is certainly qualified for the *Lord's Supper*, as it is an act of *commemoration.*

Lastly, You observe in the institution of the Sacrament, that the *blood* of the *Covenant* which is shed for us, is said *to be shed for the remission of sins.* And it is in hope, and humble assurance of this remission, that you approach God's table, and commemorate the all-sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the World. But then, if you know any thing of the Christian Religion, you must know, that there is a further condition required, besides repenting of your own sins, and having faith in Christ's blood, to qualify you for the reception of *this benefit* of the holy Sacrament; namely, that you *be in charity with all men,* and forgive others as you expect God should forgive you. And whosoever hath *this charity*, is certainly qualified for the *Lord's Supper*, as it is an act of christian fellowship and communion.

The necessary *moral qualifications* therefore for the Sacrament are these three: *Repentance, Faith, and Charity.* Which I have above expressed more largely in the words of the catechism, to shew you upon how good a bottom the short directions therein given about examination are founded.

And truly I think it would be needless to explain more particularly what these qualifications are, and how a man may know when he is thus qualified, for verily you know all this without being told. You know what it is to be sorry for sin, and whether you be so or no; whether you intend to lead a new
life,

life, or continue in your old course of living. You know what it is to believe the gospel, and whether you believe it or not: And what it is to love your brethren, and whether you love or hate them. There is nothing in all this examination, but asking your own hearts a very few questions, which your own consciences will as readily answer as you can ask. A sincere man who is troubled at the remembrance of his sins, who heartily wishes he had not fallen into them, who is desirous and determined to leave them off, and finds within himself, that he hath no trust or hope in any thing for pardon and salvation, but in God's mercies through Christ, and that he bears no ill-will towards his neighbours (and surely any man can tell whether this be the state of his mind or no) I say, he that can with a good conscience declare before God, these are his thoughts, these his resolutions, this his trust and his hope, need never be afraid of coming to the Lord's table though he have made no further or more particular preparation. He may with these honest and good dispositions draw near with comfort, and depend upon being well received, and finding great benefit from the ordinance.

No: all the difficulty that attends these enquiries, when there is any, lies here; in endeavouring to dissemble, and striving to make our hearts say what they will not say. It is very hard indeed for a man to say *I truly repent of my sins*, when he knows that really he is not much concerned about them: Or to say, *I steadfastly purpose to lead a new life*, when indeed he hath no such thoughts: Or to say, *I have a lively faith in God's mercies, through Christ*, when he seldom or never thinks of his interest in Christ, and perhaps had never any true sense of the benefits of a Saviour: Or to say, *I have a thankful remem-*

brance of his death and passion, when prehaps he never seriously and thankfully reflected on them: Or to say, *I am in charity with all men*, when he knows there are some people in the world to whom he is not reconciled, neither doth he endeavour or desire to be so. If this should be the case of any of you my brethren, for God's sake keep away from the Sacrament, and come not to provoke God's wrath against you by profaning the *blood of the Covenant*.

Here then you see where the difficulty lies: Not in the examination properly speaking, but in the *preparation of the heart*. Not in the enquiring whether or no you are in a fit disposition to receive the Sacrament, but in *bringing yourselves into that fit disposition*. I mean thus, that although it be an easy thing for a man to know whether he repents or no purposes well for the future or no; yet it may be a great difficulty to some men to repent, seriously to hate their sins, and seriously to resolve to forsake them. This may be a grievous matter to an habitual sinner; and yet it is certain he must never think of coming to the Sacrament 'till he doth thus repent and determine to lead a better life. For it is dangerous, and utterly contrary to all notions of the *Lord's Supper*, to come thither with an affection or kindness for any lust, or with a desire or will to pursue any course of sin that we happen to have engaged in. So again, though it be an easy thing for a man to examine himself, whether he be in charity with all his neighbours; yet he may find it a difficult matter, if he be not in charity, to bring himself from the bottom of his heart to forgive them; and if this be his case, that he cannot freely pardon them, he must not dare to come to the holy Communion. This you may think is a hard doctrine for such sort of men to be thus debarred a thing

thing *generally necessary to their Salvation*. But I will tell you one that is much harder, and that is, that such persons as do neither truly repent of their own sins, nor heartily forgive their brethren their trespasses, are not only excluded from the Sacrament, but from the kingdom of Heaven too, so long as they continue in this way: And that if they should be taken out of the world before they have made themselves fit for receiving the Sacrament, there is no hopes for them that they shall go to Heaven. The only way then for such people is to amend their lives, and to set heartily and earnestly about the plain and common duties of christianity, and so qualify themselves by this means for the Sacrament; and then by God's blessing they will be qualified for a better state hereafter, when God shall be pleased to call them to it.

But it appears by all that has been said about these *moral Qualifications*, that every truly honest and well-meaning man, who is sensible of his past faults, and determines to become a new man, who doth truly believe and trust in Jesus Christ, and is in charity with all his neighbours, may with a very easy conscience, and with great comfort approach the Lord's table as often as he is invited to it. You see there is not much for him to understand and carry in his mind; nothing but what plainly arises from our Saviour's own words when he appointed the ordinance. Namely, that he should thankfully receive the consecrated bread and wine *in memory of his dying Saviour*, trusting in his blood for the remission of his sins, and pleading his sufferings to God the Father for the full pardon of them. And that he should thereupon *renew his vows of a holy life*, and enter into a *new covenant* with God to be his most faithful servant ever after. This is all
that

that is ordinarily needful to be remembered. And then as to the examination of his *moral qualifications*, viz. whether he repents, and believes the gospel, and is in charity with mankind; it is so easy, that I imagine a well meaning man can hardly fail of knowing whether he is fit to communicate in these respects or no.

And now I have done, and do only beseech you to consider what has been said; and that the *holy communion* is an ordinance from which you cannot safely absent yourselves, if you desire that it should go well with you, either in this world or in the next; for assure yourselves it is requisite to make you truly virtuous and religious men; to make you grow in Grace, and take delight in your christian duties, and to give you all that satisfaction and peace of mind which a man desires to reap in the practice of his religion; and moreover that it is *generally necessary for the preservation of your souls and bodies to life everlasting*. God grant you may not only be worthy communicants but frequent communicants too; for your own sakes, and for the sake of his dear son Jesus Christ. To whom, &c.

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